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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

Developments in Indochina

MORI/CDF

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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

CAMBODIA

The military situation is quiet as South Vietnamese forces continue to move into eastern Kompong Cham Province. Some insight into Hanoi's present intentions in Cambodia has been provided by [REDACTED] who talked with a Viet Cong information officer in Paris.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Several Catholic political groups have finally agreed to form a single party. The Phung Hoang program--Saigon's controversial effort to counteract the Communists' subversive network--is to be consolidated under the National Police Command beginning in January.

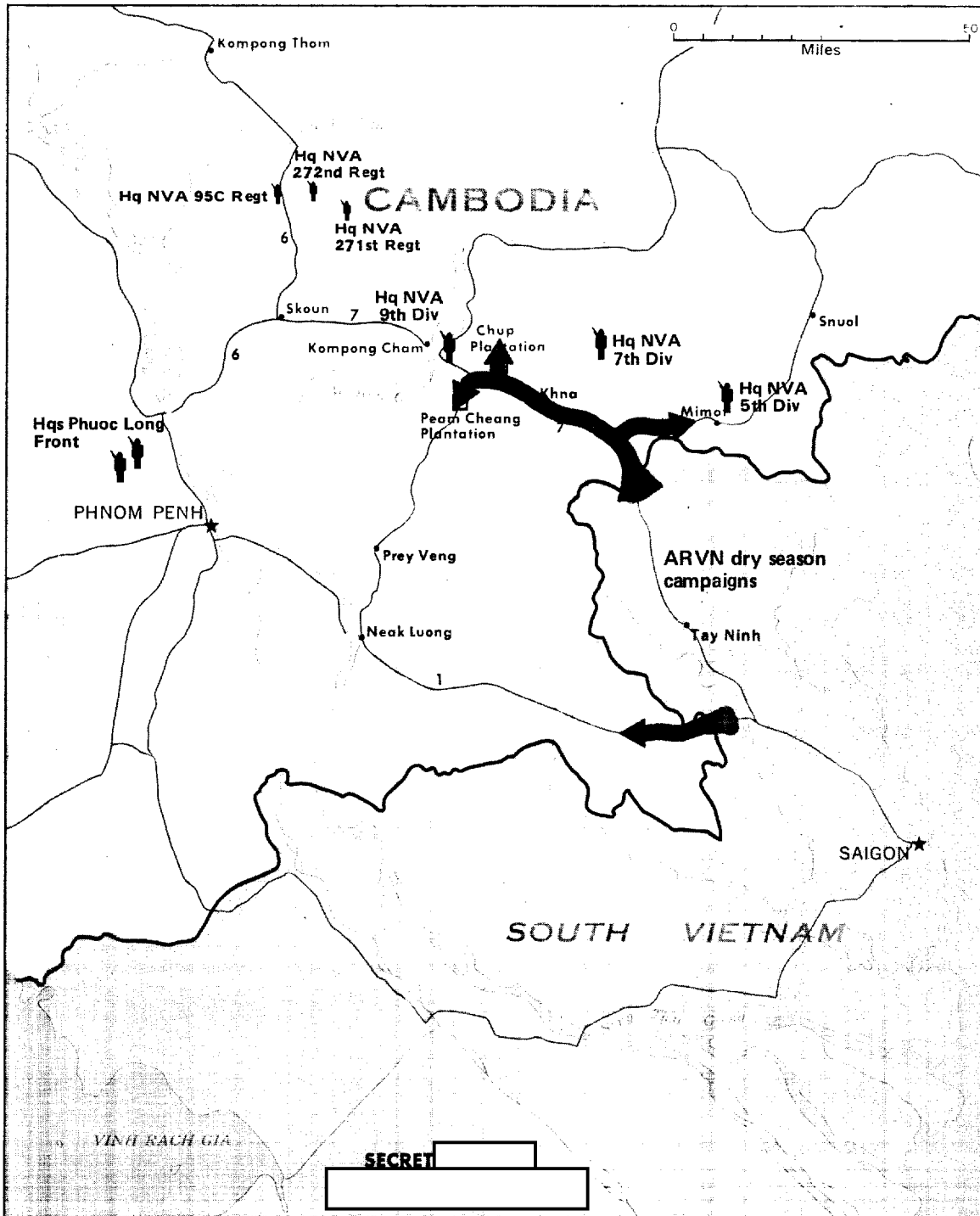
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CAMBODIA

The military situation is quiet as South Vietnamese forces continue to move into eastern Kompong Cham Province. South Vietnamese airborne troops with armor support are encountering little resistance in clearing the area around the village of Khna, which will serve as a support base for future forays north and south of Route 7. Moves into the major plantation areas nearby will begin as soon as sufficient supplies and ground forces are assembled at Khna. Other South Vietnamese forces are scheduled to mount a diversionary attack along Route 7 toward Mimot, while similar spoiling operations by a smaller South Vietnamese task force are under way in the Parrot's Beak area along Route 1.

Communist main-force units have not reacted to the South Vietnamese deployment so far. Radio direction-finding of 24 November reveals that the major elements of the three enemy divisions--5th, 7th, and 9th--that normally operate in the Kompong Cham - Kratie Province area are still in the areas they occupied prior to the South Vietnamese incursion. In the Route 6 area, the mixed Vietnamese/Khmer Communist 205th Regiment recently returned to its regular base area in the Andoung plantation just east of the roadway, possibly signaling a return to action following a period of rest and refitting. There has been little fighting along Route 6 since Cambodian forces abandoned a portion of the road two weeks ago.

In the Phnom Penh area, the government has made little headway in pushing major elements of the Communist Phuoc Long Front from positions close to the capital. According to the US defense attaché, the clearing operations there continue to be haphazardly directed.

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The presence of Communist units has had some effect on morale in the city, and there is a widespread fear that a terrorist campaign may be in the works. The distribution of anti-government leaflets in recent days is the only evidence of unusual activity, but government security in the city and its environs is poor, and the Communists probably do have the capability of mounting terrorist or other actions in Phnom Penh itself.

Communist Intentions

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Catholic Politics

Leaders of several Catholic political groups finally have agreed to form a single party, but it is not clear whether they will be able to reverse the declining course of Catholic political fortunes. [REDACTED] the Nhan Xa, the Greater Solidarity Force (GSF), and the "Lily Group" of Catholic legislators associated with Senator Huyen have agreed, after months of negotiation, to launch the new party by the beginning of next year.

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Some influential members of the clergy have been urging Catholic political unity for some time, but the most recent impetus leading to an agreement apparently was the poor showing of the Catholic groups in the Lower House elections last August. The Nhan Xa and the GSF fared so poorly that some observers had concluded that they faced the possibility of political extinction if they continued to go it alone. Because of this, the Lily group, which has considerable strength in the Senate, is expected to dominate the new party.

Although the new party could become a more effective force than the individual groups, some significant Catholic factions remain out of the coalition. Moreover, it is not clear whether the party will be able to overcome the personal rivalries among Catholic politicians and the differences over policy which have hindered past efforts at unity. The leaders of the new party have not yet agreed on basic policy. In the past the Lily group has taken an independent position and the Nhan Xa has been pro-government; the GSF recently became harshly critical of President Thieu's election policy.

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Thieu's attitude toward the party will have an important bearing on its future. Despite the recent critical attitude of some of its leaders, the Catholics undoubtedly would welcome an opportunity to play an important role in the government as their best hope of improving their political position. The Catholics have formed an important part of Thieu's support, but in recent years the President has soured toward political parties and politicians in general. Moreover, he probably is still angry at some of the leaders of the new party for their failure to support his re-election. [REDACTED]

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National Police Take Over Phung Hoang

The Phung Hoang program--Saigon's controversial effort to counteract the Communists' subversive network--is to be consolidated under the South Vietnamese National Police Command beginning in January. The consolidation is not scheduled to be completed until late 1972.

Since Phung Hoang operations began in 1968, the program has relied primarily on three elements of the government's security and intelligence organization: the Special Branch of the National Police, the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU), and the National Police Field Forces (NPFF). The Special Branch has been primarily responsible for running clandestine operations against the enemy's cadre network; the PRU have been the program's main action arm, arresting suspects targeted by Phung Hoang informants and conducting tactical intelligence operations against local Viet Cong units; and the NPFF has back-stopped the PRU when larger field units have been needed. The program's bureaucracy has spread throughout the country, functioning in a labyrinthine command structure that often finds its operatives at cross purposes.

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The consensus of observers who have worked with the program is that Phung Hoang's accomplishments have been meager. In part this has resulted from the Communists' skill in avoiding detection and in penetrating Saigon's security apparatus, but it also stems from the program's cumbersome organization. The absence of clearly defined command authority over civilian and military components has often held up operations and added to the confusion over authority.

Consolidating control of Phung Hoang under the National Police will not solve all the program's problems, but a single command authority should help to cut down jurisdictional disputes. Civilian participation in the program probably will increase, a trend the South Vietnamese must begin in all government agencies as the emphasis on military involvement in them is reduced.

The changing nature of the war from big-unit operations to small-scale attacks and political subversion dictates the need for increased emphasis and expertise in detecting and eliminating the enemy's undercover apparatus. The Viet Cong have indicated through recent policy pronouncements and by their actions that they intend to put more emphasis on penetrating government security organizations and national political parties and interest groups. They also have indicated an intention to step up recruiting in an attempt to rebuild their weakened cadre network in much of the country. Over the long term, the ability of the Saigon government to sustain its position as the authority in majority control in South Vietnam will depend in part on Saigon's ability to narrow what currently is regarded as a gap between the government's intelligence capabilities and those of the Communists. Improvements in Phung Hoang will aid this process.

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